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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 6530
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001651

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY TRYING TO KEEP ITS INFLUENCE IN BOSNIA

REF: ANKARA 1618

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Turkey is trying to keep a foot in the Balkans with its position that Bosnia-Herzegovina (BIH) is not ready to close its Office of the High Representative (OHR) and transition to a reinforced EU Special Representative (EUSR), despite supporting BIH's constitutional reform efforts and NATO membership aspirations. Turkey and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) are in lockstep on BIH policy since Ankara is representing the OIC in all of its negotiations in the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) meetings. The OIC Bosnia Contact Group judges that BIH does not have enough political stability to make the transition. Turkey plans to present this position before the November 18 PIC meeting. However, Turkey continues to support extending the NATO Membership Action Plan to BIH in a package with that of Montenegro (REFTEL) and EU integration down the road. End Summary.

12. (C) According to Turkish MFA contacts, Turkey still fears being left out of the EU-led Bosnia stabilization process, despite USG efforts to secure for the Turks the same status enjoyed by Russia and the US. (Comment: The OHR's closure is a requirement by the PIC for BIH's EU integration. End Comment) The Turkish MFA and the Egyptian Embassy stated that Turkey, as the OIC president, is working as a conduit for the OIC and therefore both have the same position on BIH, particularly since neither wants to be left out of the process after the OHR transition. Our Turkish MFA contact told us Turkey is willing to work with the EU, Russia, and the US to move the process forward but emphasized that the EU must include Turkey indefinitely as a stakeholder, especially considering Turkey's history and connection with the region. (Comment: Turkey was offended that it was left out of the initial BIH EU integration talks and continues to distrust EU intentions. End Comment)

13. (C) The Turkish MFA's Guclu Kalafat told us that Turkey has supported the OIC's resurrection of the Bosnia Contact Group from the early 1990's. He supplied a draft report of the OIC's Bosnia Contact Group meeting in Istanbul on November 9. Key excerpts included:

-- Failure of Dayton Peace Agreement Implementation: The Contact Group found that the BIH's lack of implementation of some key elements of the Dayton Peace Agreement-- particularly relating to the right of the refugees to return-- have obstructed the process of reconstruction,

democratization, and reintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

-- Closure of OHR: The OIC Group recommends that any early step for the transition from the OHR to the EUSR should be "carefully considered" because it has not found that the 5 2 objectives and conditions -- a stable political situation and the functionality of central government -- identified by the PIC in February 2008 meeting have been fully met. Moreover, the OIC claims the constitutional reform package has not been endorsed by all BIH stakeholders.

-- Turkey's role: The OIC expressed its appreciation to FM Davutoglu for Turkey's active engagement in BIH and on behalf of the OIC Contact Group in the PIC Steering Board proceedings.

¶4. (C) Turkey and the OIC are keeping engaged with the Bosniaks because of their close ties. Kalafat said the OIC naturally favors the Bosniaks because they preserve the interests of the Muslim community. He stated that although Turkey talks to all parties, it frequently communicates with the Bosniak leader, Haris Silajdzic. Both the MFA and the Egyptian Embassy said that Silajdzic attended and spoke at the last two contact group meetings to brief on the current situation in BIH.

¶5. (C) The MFA envisions BIH entering into NATO before the EU since, it contends, BIH is not ready to transition to EUSR. Kalafat said Turkey is planning to bring up Bosnia's Membership Action Plan application at the December 2-4 NATO ministerial and strongly encouraged the US to follow suit.

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¶6. (C) Turkey expects to raise its objection to the closure of the OHR at the next PIC meeting beginning on November 18. Turkey does not have a date in mind when the BIH would be ready for transition, which we emphasized is worrisome considering the PIC would like the transition to be completed six months before BIH enters elections in October 2010. The next session of the OIC Bosnia Contact Group is planning to convene at the ambassadorial level in Sarajevo. (Note: No date was specified. End Note)

¶7. (C) Comment: It is instructive that the MFA has just formed a separate directorate for the Balkans, which previously was folded into the European directorate. Turkey continues to register its commitment to stability in the Balkans, but is also emphasizing its insistence upon being included indefinitely in the decision-making progress -- particularly with respect to BIH. While Turkey says it is talking to all parties, it and the OIC definitely have a stronger connection with Silajdzic, which may not help the process progress. Turkey is supportive of BIH's NATO integration because, as a NATO member, it feels it can champion BIH's cause. Its inability, however, to do so with the EU negotiations has Ankara and the OIC scrambling not to be left out.

JEFFREY

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